

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 200359Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7000

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 1191

CHIANG MAI 016 DATED 19JAN76 BEING REPEATED TO YOU FOR
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P R 190803Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSULATE CHIANG MAI

TO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 2539

AMCONSULATE UDORN 278

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CHIANG MAI 016

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, TH

SUBJECT: CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION IN NORTHERN THAILAND

1. SUMMARY. IN MID-JANUARY SWING THROUGH SOUTHERN PROVINCES OF CONSULAR DISTRICT CONSULAR OFFICERS DISCOVERED SOME UPSURGE IN CT ACTIVITY, MUCH OF IT SEASONAL AND IN RESPONSE TO RTG INITIATIVES. PROSPECT IS FOR CONTINUATION HIGHER LEVEL ACTIVITY CENTERING ON ROAD CONSTRUCTION TILL ADVENT RAINY SEASON. NO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE EXTERNAL SUPPORT FROM LAOS BUT SOME U.S.-MADE WEAPONS NOW APPEARING IN CT INVENTORY. SMALL NUMBER THAI CT FROM NORTHEAST HAVE NOW MOVED IN. STILL, SIZE OF INSURGENT FORCE RELATIVELY SMALL, NO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE EXPECTED AND LOCAL CONFIDENCE RE
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RTG ABILITY TO CONTAIN IT FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE APPEARS

JUSTIFIED. END SUMMARY.

2. JAN. 15-17 CONSUL, VICE CONSUL HOURIGA AND CONSULAR ASSISTANT CHAT NA-CHIANG HAI VISIED PHITSANULOK, PHICHIT, AND PETCHABUN PROVINCES WITH PARTICULAR AIM OF ASSESSING CURRENT SECUTIYY SITUATION IN NORTH AND, SPECIFICALLY, IN TRI-PROVINCE AREA. (OTHER SUBJECTS DISCUSSED DURING THEIR VISIT WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY.)

3. THEY MET WITH GOVERNORS OF PHITSANULOK AND PETCHABUN, AS WELL AS VICE GOVERNOR OF FORMER AND DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF PHICHIT. ALSO IN AREA OF SECURITY, THEY HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH MAJOR GENERAL SAK BOONTRAKUL, DIRECTOR OF JOINT SECURITY CENTER 6 (RESPONSIBLE FOR TAK AND TRI-PROVINCE AREA OF PHITSANULOK, PETCHABUN, AND WESTERN LOEI), COLONEL PHICHIT KULLAVANICH, G-3 OF THIRD ARMY HEADQUARTERS (RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF NORTH THAILAND), SPECIAL COLONEL RUANSACK CHAIKOMIN, DEPUTY COMMANDER OF RTA TRI-PROVINCE AREA HEADQUARTERED AT LOMSAK, AND HIS G-3 COLONEL VIRAVIT. AFTER DAY IN PHITSANULOK, CONSULATE OFFICERS DROVE CIRCUITOUS ROUTE TO PHICHIT, PETCHABUN, LOMSAK, AND RETURN (VIA ROUTE 12) TO PHITSANULOK.

4. PICTURE THAT EMERGED FROM TRIP WAS OF SOME UPSURGE SINCE EARLY DECEMBER IN ACTIVITY (AS IS NORMAL DURING DRY SEASON), MUCH OF IT CAUSED BY ROYAL THAI ARMY (RTA) ITSELF. PROSPECT IS FOR CONTINUED, RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF OPERATIONS DURING REMAINDER OF DRY SEASON (I.E. TILL JUNE), AGAIN ATTRIBUTABLE TO RTA. STILL, THERE IS NO SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN RELATIVE STRENGTH OF EITHER SIDE IN CONFLICT.

5. IN TRI-PROVINCE AREA, AS IS CUSTOMARY IN NORTH, RECENT INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT (RTG) ROAD CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES. THE PRIMARY AREA OF ENGAGEMENT HAS BEEN IN WESTERN PETCHABUN PROVINCE NEAR PHITSANULOK BORDER, WHERE HIGHWAY DEPART-
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MENT, PRECEDED BY RTA SECURITY FORCES, AT END OF RAINY SEASON STARTED TO CONSTRUCT HIGHWAY SOUTH FROM ROUTE 12 ALONG HIGH RIDGE PARALLELING PROVINCIAL BORDER AND KNOWN TO BE CT STRONGHOLD. THIS EFFORT THUS FAR HAS COST RTA 5 DEAD AND 20 WOUNDED WHILE KNOWN CT CASUALTIES NUMBER 8. AFTER COMPLETING ONLY SIX KILOMETERS, WORK ON ROAD HAS BEEN HALTED DUE TO CT PRESSURE BUT IS EXPECTED TO RESUME SHORTLY AND, AGAIN, TO MEET WITH STRONG RESISTANCE.

ELSEWHERE, ROAD BEING CONSTRUCTED FROM NAM PAD IN UTTARADIT TO DAN SAI IN LOEI HAS CONTINUED THUS FAR WITHOUT SERIOUS INTERRUPTION (CONTRARY TO BANGKOK POST REPORT JAN. 17). HOWEVER, COMPLETED PORTION IS IN VALLEY WHEREAS PETCHABUN ROAD IS IN CT HIGHLAND AREA.

6. RECENT CT ATTACKS IN THE NAKHON THAI AREA OF NORTHERN PHITSANULOK PROVINCE ARE ALSO RELATED TO RTG

ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS. NAKHONCHUM POLICE STATION THERE WAS ONLY RECENTLY ESTABLISHED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE RTG PRESENCE FOR THAI VILLAGERS IN ISOLATED AREA. CT'S IN NEARBY STRONGHOLD TOOK UP CHALLENGE AND HAVE MOUNTED PRESSURE AGAINST STATION. COLONEL PHICHIT SAID THERE HAVE BEEN NO CASUALTIES AT ALL ON EITHER SIDE IN RECENT INCIDENTS AT THE STATION. CT'S HAVE, HOWEVER, BEEN PROPAGANDIZING LOCAL THAI VILLAGERS (AS HAVE STUDENT ACTIVISTS FROM BANGKOK, ACCORDING TO SPECIAL COLONEL RUANSAK).

7. IN THE JSC-6 AREA GENERAL SAK ESTIMATES THERE ARE TOTAL OF 700 CT REGULARS, 500 OF THEM IN THE TRI-PROVINCE AREA AND ANOTHER 200 IN TAK. OPPOSING THOSE IN FORMER AREA ARE TEN RTA LINE COMPANIES, ACCORDING TO COLONEL VORAVIT. ONE NEW DEVELOPMENT GENERAL SAK NOTED WAS INTRODUCTION OF 30 THAI CT'S FROM THE NORTHEAST.

8. OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE APPEARANCE OF SUCH U.S.-MADE WEAPONS AS M-79 GRENADE LAUNCHERS AND 75-MM. RECOILLESS RIFLES (ATTRIBUTED TO SINGLE AERIAL SIGHTING) IN CT ARSENAL. LATTER, HOWEVER, IS STILL BASICALLY OF CHINESE ORIGIN. SOURCES AGREED NO EVIDENCE YET OF INCREASED LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM LAOS SINCE COMMUNIST

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TAKEOVER RLG. HOWEVER, COL. PHICHIT MAINTAINED SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR INSURGENCY IN NORTH COMING FROM BANGKOK AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN THAILAND. CT HAVE TENDED TO USE LARGER FORCES (I.E) 100W MEN) IN RECENT ATTACKS WHILE, CONVERSELY, RTA IS SWITCHING TO SMALL UNIT ACTIVITIES (E.G. NIGHT AMBUSHES). THERE ARE NEW REPORTS ALSO OF CT'S TAKING SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS AND YOUNG THAI FARMER VOLUNTEERS UP INTO HILLS OF PETCHABUN PROVINCE FOR BASIC TRAINING. COLONEL PHICHIT SAID YEAR-END TOTALS SHOW THERE HAS BEEN REVERSAL IN RTA'S FAVOR IN KILL RATIO BETWEEN 1974 AND 1975.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 200359Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7001

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 1191

P R 190803Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSULATE CHIANG MAI

TO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 2540

AMCONSULATE UDORN 279

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CHIANG MAI 016

9. TAK PROVINCE REMAINS QUIET, ACCORDING TO ABOVE JSC-6 AND THIRD ARMY SOURCES, BUT THERE ARE NO PLANS TO RENEW CONSTRUCTION ON UMPHANG-MAE SOT RAOD ("DEATH HIGHWAY") WHICH WAS HALTED LAST YEAR. THESE SAME SOURCES AGREED THAT, DESPITE PROSPECT OF INCREASED ACTIVITY IN NORTH UNTIL ADVENT OF RAINY SEASON, CT'S WILL NOT MOUNT ANY SUBSTANTIAL NEW ATTACKS AND THIRD ARMY FORCES WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN ANY ATTACKS THAT DO OCCUR.

10. VARIOUS RTG OFFICIALS AND OTHER THAI CIVILIANS ENCOUNTERED ON TRIP ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE RE INSURGENCY. INDEED (IN MARKED CONTRAST TO MILITARY)

MOST CIVILIANS INDICATED DISINTEREST IN PROBLEM PROBABLY REFLECTING ACCURATELY APATHY OF GENERAL PUBLIC. A FEW WERE WORRIED, HOWEVER, THAT RECENT DISPLAYS OF RTG WEAKNESS MIGHT CAUSE THE THAI PEOPLE TO TURN AWAY IN DISGUST AND SEEK RADICAL SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS. CONCERNING
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UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS, GENERAL SAK SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT CT'S TO MAKE ANY EFFORT TO DISRUPT THEM.

11. COMMENT. CONSULATE TEAM FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY QUIET CONFIDENCE AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF KEY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS CURRENTLY IN SOUTHERN HALF OF THE CONSULAR DISTRICT CHARGED WITH COUNTERING CT INSURGENCY. BASED ON THEIR OBSERVATIONS AND OTHER REPORTS AGREE WITH THEIR CONCLUSION THAT NO SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN NORTHERN INSURGENCY SITUATION WILL OCCUR BEFORE NEXT RAINY SEASON. CONSULAR OFFICER WILL VISIT CHIANG RAI JAN. 20-21 AND, IF WARRANTED, THIS OVERALL ASSESSMENT WILL THEN BE SUPPLEMENTED.

HARBIN

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